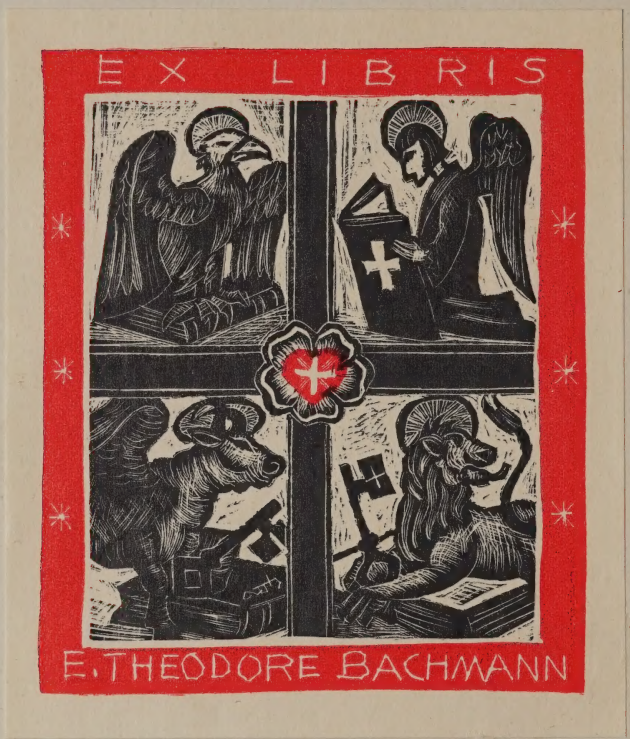
A REVEALING INTIMACY

A Friend's Tribute to
Alexander Smith Cochran



LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
APR 7 1999
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BX 5995 .C63 F74 1930
Freeman, James E. 1866-1943.
A Revealing intimacy

A REVEALING INTIMACY

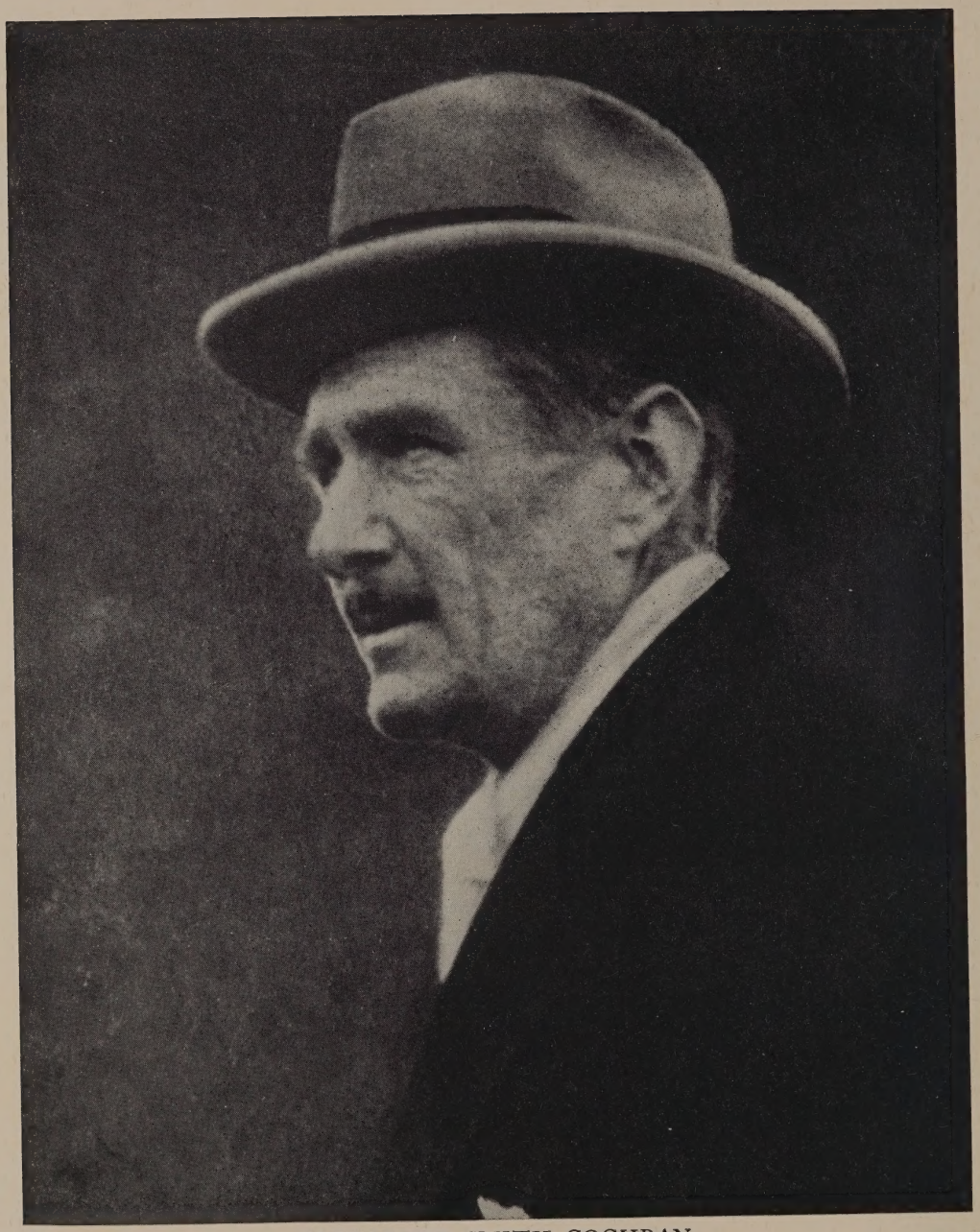
A Revealing Intimacy

By

THE RIGHT REVEREND JAMES E. FREEMAN, D.D., LL.D.
Bishop of Washington

MCMXXX
WASHINGTON, D. C.

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
APR 7 1999
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



ALEXANDER SMITH COCHRAN
1875—1929

A Revealing Intimacy

FRIENDSHIP that approximates intimacy affords opportunity for revealing both the weakness and the strength of character. Frequently, friendship excels even kinship in that it gives opportunity for an exchange of confidences, confidences that relate to the more intimate and sacred experiences of life. Rightly appraised, a true friendship that stands the test of years is to be regarded as one of life's highest and holiest experiences. It is not an uncommon happening in such a relation to find that the deeper revelation of character comes only after years of contact and then only discloses itself in days of trial and testing. A day of misfortune when life is shadowed, tests the deep things of character more completely than years of cloudless skies and abounding activity. Some lives are more articulate than others, some find the language of the heart and soul incapable of expression. One of the real joys of life, one of its finest adventures, as well as one of its greatest privileges, is to

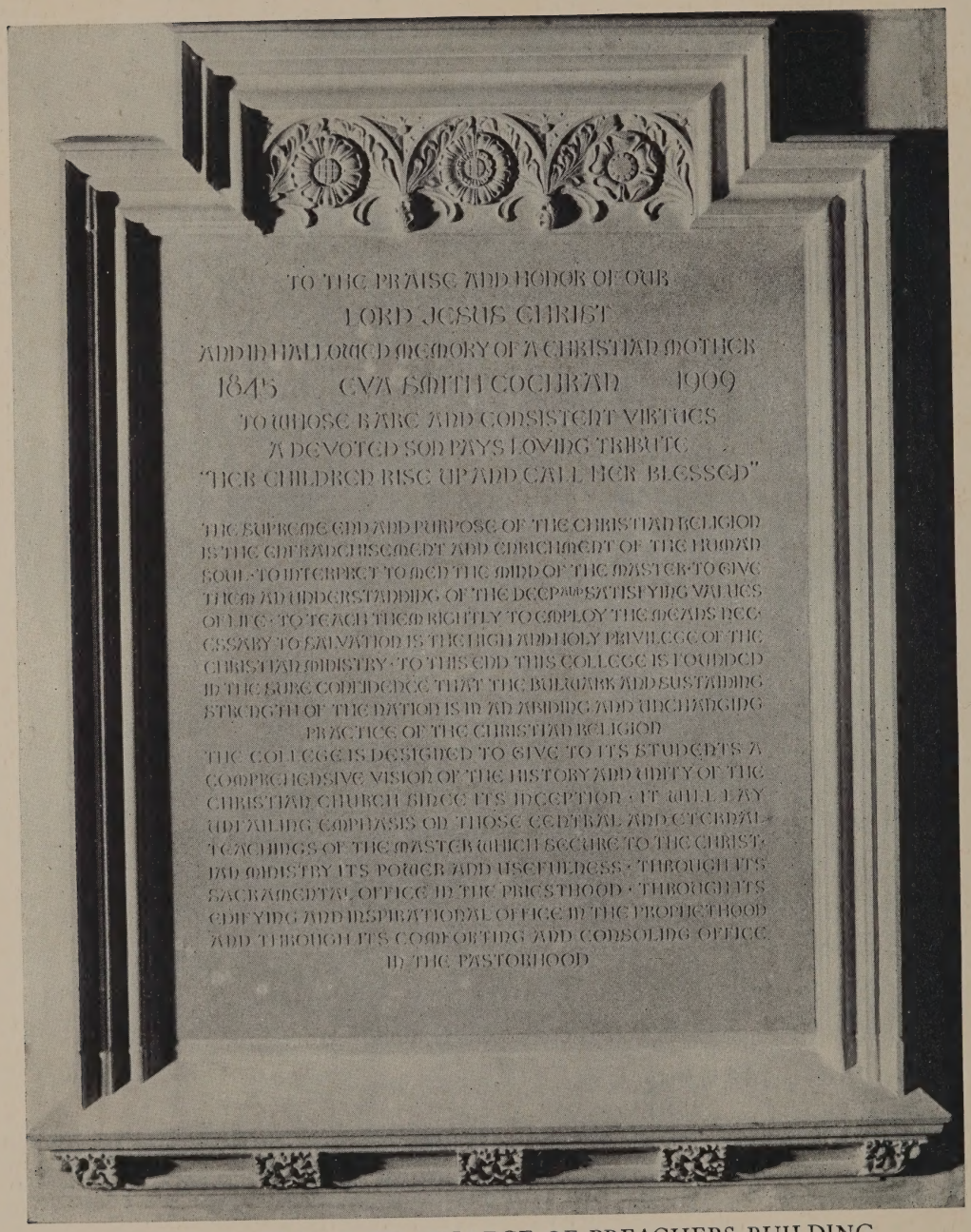
be permitted to penetrate the inner recesses of the mind and heart of one whom we have long admired, and to discover traits and qualities hitherto undisclosed and unexpressed. Most of us see each other "through a glass darkly," only now and again is the revelation full and complete. What we dare not write of a friend in life, we may venture to express when death breaks the seal of confidence.

That men live in deeds not years, and that the measure of accomplishment is determined by the spirit in which their work is done, is demonstrably true. "Every man's work shall be made manifest, of what sort it is," is the final criterion of appraisal. There are those who discharge their accepted obligations that what they do may be caught in the white light of publicity. There are others whose sense of stewardship is such that they zealously avoid exposure, with all its attendant acclaim of praise and commendation. America, perhaps as no other nation, is distinguished for the scope and volume of its generosity. More and more the custodians of wealth are learning that possession carries with it large and weighty responsibilities. There are those who scatter and yet increase, while there are others who become impoverished through selfish retention of what they have gained or inherited. It has been my privi-

lege to be both counselor and almoner to those who have found their greatest satisfaction in dispensing their treasure for the benefit of their fellows. A generosity that takes no account of social, racial or religious prejudices, that is unlimited by personal hobbies or conceits, is rather rare and only now and again met with. I write of one who, born to wealth, circumscribed for long years by physical weakness, given to habits of study and reflection, a thinker and a student, gave himself without reserve to a standard of stewardship that was broad and inclusive of Catholic and Protestant, Jew and Gentile, black and white, that was quite limitless in its extent and large in its munificence. That the delicate man who became an international figure in yachting circles, and was the proud bearer of a commission in the British Navy, while an American citizen, was assiduously and secretly practicing the habit of discriminating and generous giving, was little known, even to his closest associates. Born of a family whose generosity and fine domestic life constitute in themselves an annal of high value, Alexander Smith Cochran came naturally to recognize and discharge the obligations that wealth inevitably imposes. A man of culture whose life was marked by reserve that frequently made him misunderstood, given to few associates who commanded his confidence, driven

repeatedly into an enforced exile that a persistent disease exacted of him, finding his chief pursuits in travel and reading; he never lost touch with the world of need about him and gladly and secretly recognized its claims and gave to its necessity. In the wide variety of enterprises to which he ministered he exhibited a deep personal interest and a discriminating understanding. He literally abhorred notoriety. On one occasion a rare Oriental rug was left at the office of the Metropolitan Museum containing nothing more than the visiting card of its donor. When the unusual value of the rug was disclosed, no one could be found who had knowledge of how it had been secretly left with an attendant. It was strikingly characteristic of the man.

As an illustration of the quickness with which he seized an opportunity to render a notable service, I recall an experience I had with him at "Grasslands," his farm in Westchester County. He had bought a herd of fine Alderney and Jersey cattle and one evening as we walked through the great barns where they were housed I asked him as to what disposition he made of the milk. I ventured to observe to him that in the dispensaries in Yonkers of which I was then president, we needed large quantities of milk for the tuberculous sick to whom in increasing num-


TO THE PRAISE AND HONOR OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND IN HALLOWED MEMORY OF A CHRISTIAN MOTHER
1845 EVA SMITH COCHRAN 1909
TO WHOSE RARE AND CONSISTENT VIRTUES
A DEVOTED SON PAYS LOVING TRIBUTE
"HER CHILDREN RISE UP AND CALL HER BLESSED"
THE SUPREME END AND PURPOSE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
IS THE ETERNAL CHRISTMENT AND ENRICHMENT OF THE HUMAN
SOUL · TO INTERPRET TO MEN THE MIND OF THE MASTER · TO GIVE
THEM AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEEP AND SATISFYING VALUES
OF LIFE · TO TEACH THEM RIGHTLY TO EMPLOY THE MEANS NEC-
ESSARY TO SALVATION IS THE HIGH AND HOLY PRIVILEGE OF THE
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY · TO THIS END THIS COLLEGE IS FOUNDED
IN THE SURE CONFIDENCE THAT THE BULWARK AND SUSTAINING
STRENGTH OF THE NATION IS IN AN ABIDING AND UNCHANGING
PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
THE COLLEGE IS DESIGNED TO GIVE TO ITS STUDENTS A
COMPREHENSIVE VISION OF THE HISTORY AND UNITY OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH SINCE ITS INCEPTION · IT WILL LAY
UNFAILING EMPHASIS ON THOSE CENTRAL AND CATHOLIC
TEACHINGS OF THE MASTER WHICH SECURE TO THE CHRIST-
IAN MINISTRY ITS POWER AND USEFULNESS · THROUGH ITS
SACRAMENTAL OFFICE IN THE PRIESTHOOD · THROUGH ITS
EDIFYING AND INSPIRATIONAL OFFICE IN THE PROPHETHOOD
AND THROUGH ITS COMFORTING AND CONSOLING OFFICE
IN THE PASTORHOOD

IN THE ENTRANCE TO COLLEGE OF PREACHERS BUILDING

bers we were ministering. Immediately he responded, saying: "I'll send you all you need and it is the finest you can procure," which he did. Subsequent to this and with the cooperation of his friend and physician, the late Dr. William H. Sherman, we brought to his attention the need of a sanitarium for those who were in the incipient stages of this dread disease. Again, and with lavish generosity he authorized the building of what came to be known as the "Sprain Ridge Hospital." To this institution he gave unfailing interest and support. He was touched with a sympathetic feeling for those who like himself had fallen prey to the great "white plague." To St. John's Hospital, Yonkers, built through the generosity of his father and mother, he was a large and unfailing contributor, giving to it, beyond other gifts for special purposes, the beautiful Nurses' Home. When he was compelled to seek renewal in the higher altitudes of Colorado, where he remained for a period of two years, he sought again to render a service to others who, like himself, needed rest and recuperation, by providing a charming home to which from time to time those who were less fortunate than he might come. In these inconspicuous ministries he had caught inspiration from his truly great mother, whose life and beneficence constitute one of the noble records of modern Christian service. Like her

he sought to find life's chiefest compensation and satisfaction in making life easier for those who had known misfortune. To the historic Manor Hall in Yonkers he turned with affectionate interest, restoring it and giving to it the charm of other days, enriching it with one of the finest collections of portraits of American presidents, executed by the rarest artists, and endowing it all that it might be preserved to future generations. To attempt to chronicle the scope and extent of his gifts to churches and beneficent agencies in the city of his birth, would be to give a record of service covering practically the Christian institutions of every name.

As the privileged dispenser from time to time of many of his benefactions I was under obligation to reveal to no one the source of the gift. On one occasion where a grave community situation had issued in a shortage of coal, that threatened both industrial and domestic security and comfort, he refused to furnish it as a dole to a large army of employees in the great enterprise of which he was the head, but increased immediately their pay that no feeling of extended charity should mark his generosity. His extensive plans for profit-sharing gave evidence of the consistency of his practice and guaranteed to one of America's largest industrial concerns, an unbroken

period of prosperity and peace. Even when his hand was stilled in death the evidence of his sense of responsibility to those who had long served him, found munificent expression in handsome bequests to over a thousand of his employees. Hospitals, sanitariums, schools, churches of every name, institutions of every kind were the recipients of his generous bounty, and only a limited few had knowledge of his practical and extensive service. The finely cultural things of life that have to do with what he conceived to be its chief values received his unfailing consideration. Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale tells a story of such deep human interest that we venture to quote from it:

"I began teaching English literature at Yale in the autumn of 1892; after teaching the Freshmen and Sophomores two years, it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to offer in addition an elective course, open to Seniors and Juniors, that is to say, to members of the classes of 1895 and 1896. Accordingly I offered a course in Elizabethan Drama, and it was taken by a certain number of upperclassmen.

"Among the Juniors taking my course in Elizabethan Drama was a boy named Alexander Smith Cochran. He was shy, reserved, reticent. I knew

nothing of him except that he was 'Cochran, '96.' I had not supposed that the reading in the course had made any particular impression on him, or that he had any unusual interest in the subject. Nor did I know that he was a rich man. He did satisfactory work, passed his exams, took his degree the following year, and went out into the world.

"Twelve or thirteen years later, I received a letter from England. Upon opening it, I found it was from my former pupil, Alex Cochran. He had been living in England for some time, he wrote, 'mainly engaged in riding after hounds.' But, he added, owing to the interest aroused in him by studying the Elizabethan drama when an undergraduate, he had amused himself by collecting from various British bookshops plays, poems, etc., published during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and thinking I might be interested, he wanted to tell me of his hobby, and he would in a few days send me a list of the books he had bought.

"Now many people write me that they have books which they think are valuable and it is usually my thankless task to tell them that their collection is worthless. So I supposed that young Cochran might have one or two good books, but not much more.

When his list reached me, I nearly fell out of my chair. He had an astounding collection, every item a rarity, and the whole worth at least three hundred thousand dollars. He said he did not know exactly what to do with this small but very select library. He wished to be of assistance to Yale in some way. I wrote back, expressing my amazement at the richness of his collection, congratulating him on having had the knowledge and the means to secure it, and making one or two suggestions.

"Some time after this episode, I received a letter from him, in which he said he was about to return to America, that he had a plan of his own for the books, and that he would come to see me as soon as he returned. He appeared at my house in New Haven, and began to talk of a project that had been developing in his mind for a year. He said he had enjoyed his four years at Yale well enough, that the courses he had taken had interested him more or less, but that the one thing he had missed most as an undergraduate was good conversation, good talk with his classmates. He was sure that many men wanted to talk about the things that really interested them, but fearing to be regarded as prigs or poseurs, they did not dare to do this; so all they talked about was athletics, or social gossip; or they indulged in mere badinage.

So strongly had he felt about this, the good that serious conversation might accomplish, and the unsatisfied hunger of men for it, that in his Senior year he had organized a small eating club with a few congenial spirits. At every meal, without any pretense, without any affectation or discomfort, these men talked freely and intimately about literature, art, and religion.

"Now he had come to the conclusion that the one thing needed at Yale more than anything else was an opportunity for the free and unaffected exchange of talk. In order to have this, there must be the right atmosphere. Accordingly he proposed to give his Elizabethan collection not to the University Library, but to the students. He thought it would be a good idea to have an ELIZABETHAN CLUB, with this collection of books as a center and nucleus. There were to be no entrance fees and no dues; but only those students should be elected who were seriously interested in the finer things of life, and unafraid to talk about them. This seemed to me a magnificent plan, and I naturally entered into it with enthusiasm. 'If you will find a house,' said he, 'I will buy it.' I found one, and he immediately bought it for about $75,000. Then he gave $100,000 for endowment.

"A steward was engaged, who would live with his family at the club. Tea was (and is) served without charge every afternoon. It is a pleasant sight to see a group of students, with occasional Faculty visitors, talking informally on subjects that interest them. Another favorite idea of Mr. Cochran's has been successfully carried out. This was to have about once a month a Club Night, when the members would be addressed by some distinguished visitor. Among those who have in this manner spoken on Club Nights are Sir William Osler, Lord Dunsany, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Siegfried Sassoon, John Galsworthy, and many novelists, poets, and playwrights from Europe and America.

"When it was announced some years ago, that a famous library would be sold at auction in England, Mr. Cochran went over, and bought in advance for the Club the four Folios of Shakespeare. He has also given many valuable paintings and pieces of furniture. We have a stunning painting of Queen Elizabeth, for which she sat, arrayed in royal robes.

"Alexander Smith Cochran died on June 20. He was a generous and public spirited man, and made many benefactions to organizations and to in-

dividuals. One of his most important and most enduring monuments is the Elizabethan Club at Yale. The idea of it originated with him, the plans of its constitution and membership and program were designed by him. So that in addition to his noble generosity, which made the Club possible, it is the offspring of his mind. He is a striking example of a rich man who was not only generous with his money, but devoted time and thought to stimulating and improving the minds of young men."

This, we submit, is an unusual document that betrays the refinement of the man who conceived and generously endowed the Elizabethan Club, one of Yale's choicest and most cherished possessions.

Repeatedly, through a long and intimate friendship I was astonished by the extent and variety of his interests. To the unknowing world about him he was the lover of sports, the student ever pursuing the fine and sometimes devious ways of philosophy, the lover of art and literature, in fine, the man of the world. Behind all this resided a nature delicately sensitive and gladly responsive. Given to argument and discussion, at times intensely dogmatic in his expressed convictions, he yielded to the finer impulses that proceed from the heart and disclosed an intelli-

gent understanding and responsive sympathy that were unfailing. He could not abide that which was superficial and unreal, he appraised the values of life with a judgment that was balanced and singularly accurate. At times his expressed convictions concerning men in public life as well as widely discussed public policies, seemed inimical to that which he really represented in wealth and position. The remedies and cheap panaceas for existing ills he refused to accept, even though they bore the approval of the political party of his affiliation. On one occasion I attempted to set before him the possibility of his entering public service in a capacity in which I believed he would excel. For a while it engaged his interest, he saw in it the possibility of extending the boundaries of his service to his fellows. His ultimate conclusion was that he was unfitted for it, by reason of his irritation at expedients and compromises, against which he was bound to rebel. I felt at times that he persisted in argument and debate simply because in it he found exercise for his discriminating judgment. Long years of observation led me to other conclusions. He was possessed of a sensitiveness of mind as well as a facility for discovering in a proposition its fallacies, together with a fixed aversion to anything that was counterfeit or unreal, and these, coupled with long and enforced periods of detach-

ment from chosen environments and friends by reason of physical frailty, rendered him quick to argue and combat positions that to his mind were unwarranted and untenable. Repeatedly, out of an evening of intense argument we would emerge, with his cheery, half-apologetic word: "Well, it's a bit of presumption to tell you my views concerning a matter about which doubtless we both have strong convictions and probably yours are right. In any event it's a good thing to argue a proposition, it gives one new view-points and clarifies the whole subject. You mustn't feel badly if I have been too dogmatic or insistent, it's just my way of seeing things." I cannot recall a single instance in all the years where the friendly debate broke up leaving behind a bitter taste or a misunderstanding.

When the great World War came he was very impatient at the seeming tardiness of our nation in lending itself to the support of the Allies. Impaired as he was in body, fighting always a losing game with a persistent malady, he went immediately to Europe to render such support, financial and personal as the criticalness of the occasion demanded. The story of his service to England in this great crisis is one that is finely illustrative of his zeal and generosity. Again, the extent of what he gave of his substance is

secret and unrecorded, but it was large and munificent. To England he surrendered his large ocean-going yacht, the "Warrior," and after assiduous study and preparation he fitted himself to receive a commission as a commander in the British service. What physical exactions this service laid upon him he never acknowledged, he was losing his life that he might find it. I doubt if to family and intimates he ever disclosed, either the extent of his generosity or the signal honors that accompanied his selfless devotion to a great cause. It was only after ten years that I gleaned, in part, the story of this remarkable experience that was marked by courage and fine devotion. Others might plead in such a case as his, physical disability. Others might have given of their abundance that stronger men might carry the burdens. Not so this physically handicapped man. The call found him waiting and ready, he asked for no consideration, he offered no excuses. On the Aquitania, a troop transport, he served as one of the senior officers and on the Warrior, his own yacht, in British service, he served as commander. So utterly modest and retiring was he in bearing his unique distinction that no word of applause or praise was given him. Doubtless through this experience he brought a touch of brightness and color to otherwise gray and lowering clouds and rising above self-interests and

the comforts which his wealth afforded, found satisfaction in a service that entailed sacrifice and discomforts, sacrifice and discomforts that his physical condition could ill afford to bear. I do not know to whom was disclosed the details of this dramatic story. I only know as one who enjoyed his confidence that I have had but fragments of it from his lips and then with apologies for telling that which he regarded as unworthy of recital. This is but a partial record of the generous service he rendered to England during the period of the great war. One of the things that baffled even his closest friends was his excess of reticence, his aversion to discuss anything in which he played a conspicuous or worthy part. On one occasion I dared gently to criticize him for refusing to disclose what I believed might be for the general good, and possibly provoke others to emulate his generosity, but his firm remonstrance rendered further discussion impossible. Even as I write, I feel the chastening of his spirit as I give this fragmentary and partial story of a few of the many things that deeply engaged his interest. As a further evidence of his widespread sympathies, I quote the following from the pen of John Evelyn Wrench taken from an English magazine, called the "Landmark":

"While traveling in Switzerland I have just read

in the obituary columns of The Times of the death of Alexander Smith Cochran, of New York, a warm personal friend of many years' standing and a generous helper of the English-Speaking Union in the early days.

"I have always regarded Cochran as a kind of joint-founder of the E.-S. U., because it was while dining with him at the Cafe Royal in 1912 that I first mentioned my ideas for the establishment of a great society for the purpose of making the British and American peoples better known to each other, unconnected with governments.

"In the early days of the English-Speaking Union Sir George Mills McKay, our Joint Hon. Treasurer, and I set out to get 20 friends who would each give 100 pounds a year for three years, so that the committee could be relieved of financial worry, and we could all concentrate on our membership campaign. I have forgotten how many friends came forward. I think it was 16. But despite this help, our expenses were great in our new premises in Trafalgar Square and our finances were in a low state. Cochran had helped me in connection with another scheme in which I was interested and I did not like to approach him again. One day I told my cousin,

Lady des Vœux, how worried I was about our finances and that I did not know to whom to turn. Without saying anything to me, she wrote to Cochran, telling him of our plight and of my worries. By return post I received a check for £1,175—which was the exchange value of $5,000 in 1920—and our immediate problems were solved.

"Although there have been many kind supporters of the E.-S. U. cause in recent years, I feel that we all owe a special debt to those who came forward in the first years—and chief among them Alexander Cochran.

"He was one of the most generous men I ever knew, and many persons and causes benefited by his help. He hated publicity and shunned thanks and his left hand never knew what the right hand did. The last time I saw him was when I dined with him at Claridge's, London, 18 months ago, when I was able to tell him of the rapid progress and recent developments of the E.-S. U.

"I send these few lines of tribute to a valued friend with a keen sense of personal loss."

The memory of more than thirty years of fellowship with him, broken as it was from time to time by

his long absences in Europe, is one that is replete with incidents, discussions, heart-to-heart unfoldings of life's finer and deeper meaning, and through it all runs an unbroken and continuous experience of multitudinous kindnesses rendered with extreme modesty and rare self-effacement.

The last chapter in this life story is one that has about it such sacredness that one hesitates to break the seal of confidence, nor would one dare to do so had not death removed the obligation to silence. More recent years had seen Mr. Cochran's steady and certain physical decline. Long before the final crisis came he disclosed increasing physical weakness and experienced periodic severely painful ailments incident to the disease he had long combated. The story I here relate is given only at the urgent insistence of those who feel that in it resides a value not frequently met with.

In early May, 1927, on a Saturday evening, busy with preparations for the following day, I was interrupted by the receipt of a cable from Paris, bearing Mr. Cochran's name, telling me of the satisfaction which an intimate letter of mine had brought him and concluding with an urgent invitation to cross the ocean and pay him a long deferred visit. "Your

recent letter betrays a touch of fatigue," he suggested, "come over here and rest up." Engaging as the invitation was my spring appointments seemed definitely to preclude such a coveted trip. I gratefully declined. Another cable and letter from Paris quickly followed, more insistent than the first and with a hearty desire to see my friend I sailed. Little did I realize at the time that it was to be an epochal spiritual experience in my life as well as his. Mr. Cochran and I through the long years of fellowship had only on rare occasions discussed our religious views and convictions. The very intimacy of our relations seemed to preclude it. He had once written me from Hong Kong a most reflective letter, in which he had said: "Some day I'll drift back and talk over with you our philosophies, for after all, one's life is one's philosophy." While not given to anything that was emotional or unduly demonstrative in expressing his more secret feelings, I had always felt that in the deeper recesses of his soul there resided a fine reverence for things sacred. His treasured memories of and unfailing devotion to his mother were the sure guarantees of his fine, if inarticulate religious convictions.

I arrived in Paris on June sixth, and immediately my friend came to my rooms although as I readily

saw, physically exhausted. Our meeting after the lapse of several years was refreshing and stimulating, and in spite of his weakened condition he showed the old mental alertness. Our first evening together was largely one of reminiscence. The evening of June ninth, 1927, without plan or design, was destined to be a notable one in the experience of both of us. We talked of many things until quite late in the evening, recalling incidents, and personalities with whom we had been associated and covering in general the days of the past. As I started to leave at eleven o'clock he urged me to remain for another hour, saying: "If you're not too tired let's talk some more, that is, provided you don't mind my talking to you about my own experiences in these more recent years." I knew full well the long and exacting periods through which he had passed, in hospital and sanitarium, of repeated and exhausting operations, but I had no knowledge of the fortitude with which he had stood them nor the remarkable mental and spiritual experience that had been his. "We've talked much about my case and my interests tonight, let's talk awhile about yours. What about conditions in Washington and how is the great cathedral and its other agencies coming along?" "I wanted to come over here for this visit with you," I answered, "not to talk about what I am doing, but about all those other

things in which you and I have been so long interested." "Yes, I understand that, and we'll have plenty of time to do that too, but just now tell me how you're getting along and how the work is proceeding." He displayed such an evident interest that I quickly responded, giving him a brief but graphic account of the work we had in hand, concluding with the observation that it had been difficult for me to get away from Washington at the present time, as our College of Preachers was having its June sessions. Instantly he was alert with interest. "What kind of a college is that?" he asked, "you've never mentioned it before in any of your letters." As briefly as possible I told him of this new experiment to place a fresh emphasis upon the preaching or prophetic office, adding that, in our judgment there was great need for such new emphasis. "You're entirely right about that," he responded, "as a matter of fact, it is of far greater importance to give the clergy a new conception of what we laymen need, and to have them know the spiritual poverty of the present situation, than it is to build cathedrals or parish churches. Strange as it may seem to you, through these long months of physical pain and detachment from old friends and environments, I've had time to think a good deal about many things and somehow my mind has turned to that which your College of Preachers is evidently trying

THE COLLEGE OF PREACHERS WITH THE CATHEDRAL RISING ABOVE ITS TOWER

to do; tell me more about it." In the space of a few minutes, I unfolded the aims and purposes of the new enterprise. I had never in all my experience with Mr. Cochran seen him disclose such intense interest. Novel things or those that seemed experimental made no appeal to him, but now with an eagerness quite uncommon to him, he was re-interpreting to me the values of that of which I spoke. At the end of the brief recital he asked: "What have you in the way of financial support and what facilities do you need to carry forward this splendid agency?" I told him the whole story as graphically as I could, but had hardly concluded it when he said with an evidence of deep emotion that brought him to his feet: "It's a strange thing, your coming over here just at this time and telling me about plans for an institution that, in a formless way, I have been thinking of through all these months of sickness. While I've always had a real reverence for sacred things and sacred offices, I confess, perhaps through my own carelessness, perhaps through the carelessness of those in your profession to whom on occasion I have gone, I've never until recent years had a right understanding of the Church, its ministry and sacraments. Like most boys attending a church school, I was confirmed when I was sixteen and had my first communion. Whether at home or abroad I've supported the

Church, and I've believed in it, but somehow, largely I think from lack of a proper understanding of the deep significance of Christ's teachings as interpreted to men through His Church, I've been unresponsive to its call. You know my fondness for philosophy, especially Greek, and how for years I immersed myself in the literature, art and ideals of that wonderful people; well I've found a new and finer teacher than those I have heretofore followed." From his bookcase he brought a volume: "this is one of St. Augustine's works, a book that has made a profound impression upon me, it has given me a new vision of the meaning of life and from Augustine I have passed to a still greater teacher, namely, St. Paul, and from St. Paul I have now come reverently to the greatest of all teachers, Christ Himself." As suggestive of the mental stages through which he had passed, he quoted and read extended excerpts from his three great teachers, indicating, as he read certain parallel passages, the transcendence of Him in whom he had at length found his deepest joy and satisfaction.

I do not recall in any experience I have had, anything that approximates for fine spiritual fervor and quickening zeal this memorable evening in Paris, where two men felt such kinship of soul as can only come when hearts glow with that strange thing we

call, "spiritual power." The one thing that lingers above all else in my memory of this remarkable night, I cannot find words adequately to express, but I can best interpret it by saying that, it was the calm and dispassionate judgment, the amazing clearness of vision and the unchallengable depth of sincerity that marked my friend's discourse as he sought to reveal to me the momentous intellectual and spiritual experience through which he had passed. "This new College of Preachers, or school of the prophets, of which you speak, I conceive to be of real practical value, especially in an age that has placed too great stress on material things. If through any gift or counsel, I may help a little to re-emphasize the real and satisfying values of life, which are spiritual, in other words, if I a layman, can in this way bear testimony to what I believe to be our greatest need in America today, I shall count it the greatest privilege I have ever enjoyed." With this brief word he gave me the promise of a gift of a million and a quarter dollars with which to build, equip, and endow the first unit of the College of Preachers of Washington Cathedral in the capital of the nation. The modesty with which the gift was made, the disclaimer of generosity, the affirmation of the privilege it meant to him, and the intelligence with which he visioned the great value of such an institution, all these dis-

closed themselves in less time than it now takes me to relate the incident, and the gift of a million and a quarter dollars (subsequently increased to a million, four hundred and fifty thousand dollars) occupied less than ten minutes from the time I casually told him of the spring meeting of a group of some fifty clergymen, who had met together in Washington at the call of a new, but unorganized agency, that we had come to designate: "The College of Preachers." It has repeatedly been my privilege to be the recipient of large and notable gifts for institutions to which I am officially related, and I have witnessed many evidences of high-minded stewardship marked by unusual modesty, but I have known nothing more unique in these respects, than what transpired in my friend's room in Paris, on that memorable night of June ninth, 1927. Once the promise of the great gift was made, he pledged me to hold it in confidence until such time as he saw fit to release me, and never in any future discussions with him to refer to what he had gladly done or to thank him for the doing of it. From that day forward to the end, we never again spoke of our great ideal or its further development, in terms of money. "We've set ourselves to do this thing, now let us think only of carrying it forward," this was the high resolve that brought to a climax this unforgettable evening.

As I rose to go, my friend, tired, but exhilarated by the new pledge of loyalty to a great cause, accompanied me to the street. The hour was late but in spite of it, we were both conscious as we said "goodnight," that the only rest we should enjoy was one that finds repose, not in sleep, but in the contemplation of a vision of service that commands all the consecration we may bring to it. Before the morning of a new day appeared we had both, in the wakeful hours written to e a c h other letters that, in part at least, set down the lasting impressions of our new compact.

The ideal we conceived for this inspirational and educational college was impressed so deeply upon my mind that I wrote down my conception of it and sent it by messenger to my friend the following morning. He too had found satisfaction in having by my plate at breakfast, a note of assurance, expressive of the new partnership into which we had entered. We were attempting to do something new, to establish that that should, we believed, contribute mightily to the Church, deepening and strengthening the ties of fellowship among its clergy and giving new impulse and power to its ancient prophetic office. My brief summary of what we jointly designed the college to be and do, my friend always

called "our memorandum of agreement," on another occasion he called it: "Our memorandum of dedication." This little "memorandum" became to us both a sacred thing, no articles of partnership were ever more so. It is enduringly cut in stone and placed in the large entrance hall of the college, there to bear witness to the devotion of "a certain rich man", who gave himself with his gift.

This precious "memorandum" runs as follows:

"The supreme end and purpose of the Christian religion is the enfranchisement and enrichment of the human soul. To interpret to men the mind of the Master; to give them an understanding of the deep and satisfying values of life; to teach them rightly to employ the means necessary to salvation, is the high and holy privilege of the Christian Ministry. To this end this College is founded, in the sure confidence that the bulwark and sustaining strength of a nation is in an abiding and unchanging practice of the Christian religion. The College is designed to give to its students a comprehensive vision of the history and unity of the Christian Church from its inception. It will lay unfailing emphasis on those central and unfailing teachings of the Master which secure to the Christian ministry its power and usefulness, through its sacramental office in the

priesthood; through its edifying and inspirational office in the prophethood, and through its comforting and consoling office in the pastorhood."

The readiness with which Mr. Cochran visioned the possibilities of the College of Preachers and his fine outlook upon what it was in his mind designed to be, is illustrated in a few excerpts from his letters. He had gone through great physical suffering and during the long periods in hospitals his reflection upon things spiritual betrays the depth of his feelings. "One goes along and gets absorbed in the little preoccupations of living," he wrote on one occasion, "and passes by the real things until something stirs the spirit, like a letter from a friend or a remembrance of the past." Later he writes from Paris, "I don't think an individual soul or indeed a nation itself, can find any meaning in life, or salvation, without a true religious spirit." Again he writes, as he reviews his own mental processes in acquiring a clear vision of what religious faith had come to mean to him: "Faith is a gift of God and I suppose He gives it in ways we can't understand, or understand only when we receive it. So I suppose we turn for assistance to outside help, the Church, an understanding soul, good works, etc." With remarkable discrimination he would from time to time

analyze the present methods of the Church in the light of the tragic needs of men who were seeking for light on darkened pathways. He was always generous but he urged the importance of making the Church and her ministers more effective in meeting the needs of those who, as he expressed it, were "walking in dry places, seeking rest." The need of highly consecrated men who could be "spiritual advisers", to whom those in doubt and confusion might go, he conceived to be of the most vital importance. Organizations, mechanisms might be necessary but it was the "spirit of the living creature in the wheels" that was needed. He gave me a slip of paper on which he had written a sentence that he had evidently gathered from some source that he said expressed what he felt: "Let not the pastor diminish his care of things within through his occupation about things without. For oftentimes there are those who, having as it were, forgotten that they are set over their brethren for the sake of their souls, make themselves servants with all the strength of their heart to the cares of this world."

It was a strikingly significant thing that this cultivated, finely sensitive man, whose contacts with Christian agencies and institutions had not been intimate and whose life had sustained long periods of

sickness and absence in foreign countries, should be giving himself to the study of the Church's history from its beginnings, reading with avidity the philosophy of religion and examining with minute care the various standards and systems of organized Christianity. After summing up one of his searching analyses of present conditions in the Church he wrote: "What I do feel is, that the study and understanding and appreciation of the inner meaning, development, accomplishment, spirit of the Church, from its foundation by Christ, to certainly the point where material conditions changed the outer form of its expression, is necessary, if we are to teach its spirit and keep it alive." He later says that his study of the early history of the Church, "changed or crystallized my attitude towards it." He could not think of the Church as a sporadic growth with recurring periods of new and freshened expression, changing and adapting itself to each new age. It had a divine Founder, it had systems and sacraments and to them, if it was to serve the needs of men, it must adhere. "I'm only able in my simple way to tell you what I've felt the need of, if I can through you and this College of Preachers, which has but one purpose, namely, to strengthen, stabilize and deepen the spiritual life of the Christian ministry, contribute something to the whole Church in America, I shall be grateful."

He admonished me again and again to seek for a finer unity in the Church. He wanted the College to be, not a new kind of seminary, nor necessarily a post-graduate school, but a place of retreat and spiritual refreshment to the clergy who felt the need of reemphasizing the real spiritual values of their ministry.

The two years that followed the evening in Paris were marked by a steady physical decline on the part of my friend, but as physical weakness increased, there came the fulfillment of that word spoken by Christ to another in his hour of need: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." The long friendship became a blessed and revealing intimacy. Again and again he would speak of the seeming presumption of his counselling me, a bishop of the Church, concerning matters of which he had no technical knowledge. Into the sanctuary of such a friendship one cannot bid another enter. There are intimacies too sacred to be chronicled. One day Mr. Cochran said to me as I expressed regret at parting, for he had gone to the Pacific coast in search of purer air, "Do not let us think about that, for after all we shall have spiritual contact even when far apart. What we've been talking about here will seem clearer, and we'll understand each other better. I sometimes feel

that the very physical presence is a hindrance to the intimacies of the spirit." He wanted to live to see the beautiful group of buildings in Washington completed. In my last visit with him in early June he insisted, although very feeble and in pain, in going over with me in detail the furnishings of the College. His death was on Thursday, June 20th, at Saranac. On the following Sunday his funeral was held in old St. John's Church, Yonkers, to which for generations his family had gone. The city, its citizens of every class and kind, took reverent note of his passing. The churches of every name paid loving tribute to him, and for the first time there was revealed the wide and inclusive character of his benefactions. Silent crowds upon the streets seemed to realize that "a certain rich man," who had lived in their midst, though unknown to many by reason of protracted illness, literally belonged to them. In some way they had come to sense the real worth of this quiet, retiring man; he had all unwittingly exposed his heart to the multitude. Purple and fine linen, according to the narrative of another "certain rich man," he too could possess and enjoy, but in his case the purple and fine linen did not render the heart of him who wore them unresponsive to the needs of others. Wealth and power and exalted position all too frequently effect the unbridgeable chasm that sepa-

rates groups and peoples, employers and employees; not so here. Alexander Smith Cochran, the high-minded student, the economist and man of world contacts; retiring, reticent to a fault, through countless acts of kindness created for himself a place in the esteem and affection of the people of Yonkers that is utterly unique and that justly entitles him to be regarded as her foremost citizen. Thousands of employees, men and women from every walk in life, passed silently but with evidences of deep emotion by his casket, to view for the last time the face of one whom they had seen but infrequently in life. If they were unfamiliar with his face they certainly knew the kindly impulses of his heart. It was an English author who wrote: "It is not death to live in the hearts of those who love us." Thus in many places, churches, hospitals, schools, College of Preachers, work-rooms and homes, the name of this beloved friend will be enshrined, a fine steward of wealth, who literally found his life in losing it.

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01160 3752